FRENCH FERVOR.

The National Pilgrimages to the Shrines of the Saints---No. 3.

FROM BUGLOSE TO LOURDES.

Sketch of the Quaint Old City at the Gates of the Pyrenees.

BERNADETTE SOUBIRONS.

Miraculous Apparition in the Grotto of Marsabielle.

"The Lady" and the Little Shepherdess.

Sceptical Doctors, Questioning Lawyers and Incredulous Free-Thinkers Confounded by an Uneducated Child.

Waters Springing Out of the Rock at the Word of the Divine Virgin.

A REJECTED BRIBE.

LOURDES, July 26, 1873.

Some of the pilgrims began to show the first symptoms of fatigue on the afternoon of the day which we passed at Buglose. They streamed towards the railway station in a disorderly torrent when it was time to depart; and the committeemen had to run to the front and stop them. It was fearfully hot, and many of the pilgrims were out of temper; so, when the committeemen determined to form them into procession again that day, "*Vrai Dieu, sont-ils déraisonnables ces gens là?*" said an old lady, and it is not improbable that in this unauthorized manner she may have expressed the general sense, at all events, of her sister pilgrims. We did form in line at last, however, and all through the cornfields and by the hedgerows, while the birds sung, we made the air vocal with our hymn and its thundering chorus—

Sauvez Rome et la France,
Au nom du Sacré Cœur.

There was a tremendous scrimmage at the station. A tipsy managing man in authority had got hold of the command of us, and suddenly called a halt. Then he did not know what to do with us, and kept on giving tipsy and contradictory directions, while we were slowly broiling with the setting sun in our eyes.

At length the burly form of the Viscoun of Damas slouched forward, and put things in order by superseding the tipsy man.

"Dear me!" I asked of a Grand Vicar, who had got a large umbrella and had, therefore, a mind for talk, "has nobody really got money or puffs out of these pilgrimages?"

"No," said he, simply. "The idea of them came from God. Nobody lays claim to it."

TAKING THE VEIL.

The young lady who travelled in the same carriage with me was about to become a nun; and the Grand Vicar with the large umbrella complimented her upon her resolve as she took her place in the train. He also let off a small joke at her, "Because," said he, "you are about to become my sister."

Then I put a question plumply to the military chaplain, who was a man of great wordly experience, whether if this young lady were his sister he would have advised her to take such a step?

The French Duke beside me looked up and he answered first:—"I have a sister who made a bad marriage, and fortunately lost her husband early. She was in bad health, and when she told me one day that she was about to enter the community of '*Les Sœurs Hospitalières*' I opened my eyes with astonishment. '*Ma chère*,' I said to her, '*avec votre état de santé vous ne serez jamais plus qu'une sœur hospitalisée*,' and I tried to dissuade her. *Eh bien, j'avais tort.* She is now eighty-four years old and extremely comfortable. I, too, have lived long since then, and I think that the religious sisterhood are the happiest women on earth."

And thus spoke the army chaplain:—"I would first inquire closely into her antecedents and character. If I found that she was of a quiet nature, which loved repose and did not hanker after worldly pleasure, I would advise her to take the veil."

Also said the Curé of Clichy:—"I would advise her to take the veil in any case. If she were a good girl she would be encouraged in virtue by excellent examples; if she were of indifferent goodness I should rejoice that such an excellent idea had come into her head, and suggest that she should put it into execution without loss of time, lest she should change her mind. She would have no opportunity of acting improperly as a nun. I should simply think that she had been mercifully called by Divine Providence to mend her manners, and should on no account interfere with her resolution."

We stopped shortly afterwards at a station, where the promised nun got out and drank a glass of ale. There was no nonsense about her. I accompanied her to a little ale house near the station. She had very pleasant manners; she said she was thirty. She said little else, and when I paid her a compliment, she took it with delightful coolness, as she might have done the change of a five franc note.

At every station where we stopped after leaving Buglose large crowds assembled to receive us, and cheered us loudly, and waved their handkerchiefs from window and balcony.

Nevertheless we got into trouble at Pau. It appeared that an unbelieving railway director holds authority here, and our train was delayed for two hours, in spite of some strong words from the Viscount of Damas about a breach of contract committed by this behavior.

ARRIVAL AT LOURDES.

It thus happened, moreover, that instead of arriving at Lourdes by daylight we did not get there till eleven o'clock at night in the midst of a pouring rain. A vast crowd of pilgrims, however, from Marseilles met us by torchlight, and we chanted the "Magnificat" while the lights flashed luridly about in the rain and the darkness.

The organization of the committee broke down a little at Lourdes. But there were thousands of pilgrims in the little town; and given a crowd—a French crowd—hot, wet, talkative, angry, excited, and every one composing it in immediate want of lodgings, what are a stout-hearted viscount and his friends to do with it?

Somehow or other all obstacles were overcome, and we managed to get housed about midnight. I was lodged in a large upper room at a lemonade shop. My bed was of straw, and the single sheet on it was too small; but there were an enormous oaken wardrobe on one side of the room and a very small wash-hand basin on the other, seeming quite ashamed of itself. The committee were all hoarse with their exertions, and I heard a part of them coughing in a double-bedded room next to me. They evidently had not taken the best lodgings for themselves and their acquaintance.

CHURCH AND STATE.

I walked up a stony street next morning to breakfast at the Hôtel de la Paix. I met one of the vicars of Soissons, who talked to me about the disestablishment of the Church of England. He said that the Catholic party was anxious to see the English Church disestablished, because its present large revenues made it so profitable a calling that worldly men flocked into it from interest rather than from conviction. He was a wise and reasonable man, this vicar, and so was the Curé of St. Malo, in Brittany, who presently joined us. Between the eggs and the apples of our breakfast the Curé of St. Malo spoke of the necessity of keeping the civil and ecclesiastical power quite distinct in a well-governed country; "for," he observed, "when they are joined together, as in Russia, the civil power becomes too potent and may make a terrible use of its authority. It is well that the oppressed should have some refuge and court of appeal from it, and that the terrors of the Church should not be used for political party purposes." Then we talked of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in France; and he explained that the term abbé is the generic designation of a French priest, and not a title implying any ecclesiastical rank or functions. Young priests are educated at certain religious seminaries, and unless they enter one of the monastic orders they begin their career as vicaires, or curates, acting under the authority of a superior. After a period, short or long, according to their chances, they become curés, or incumbents of some particular benefice.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

In order to enable the public of the United States to form any sort of opinion worthy of their intelligence touching the events which are now passing at Lourdes, I interrupt my narrative to give some account of the place. I will endeavor not to make that account very long, but I must make it comprehensive, or the cursory and untravelled reader—by the way, who is an untravelled reader in the United States?—might run away with false ideas and form erroneous conclusions upon insufficient information. "*La guerre*," says a French proverb, "*n'est que la mésintelligence*," and I take it that most differences of opinion between honest folk arise from ignorance on the one side or upon the other. The notorious facts with which we have to deal are these:—An interminable procession of pilgrims, men, women and children, actually does come at this present writing to kneel before a grotto in a wilderness entirely unknown to most human beings a few years ago; that the words of one little child have suddenly caused this grotto to be considered a divine sanctuary, and that popular faith among the most sceptical people in the world has raised above the grotto a vast edifice which has cost 2,000,000 of francs.

Now, how did this happen in an age of enlightenment and cheap education? How did it come about that the testimony of an ignorant little girl concerning an apparition which nobody but herself had seen found credit and brought forth such strange results? There is a peremptory way of dealing with such questions, and the word "superstition" is convenient for that purpose. It is a prudent and easy thing to give a curt denial to a fact one cannot understand and will not discuss. It is the official or permanent-clerk method of getting out of a difficulty, but it is not honest. Let us try what can be done with a fact by meeting it with just a little candor and patience. It is

A NEW MODE OF TREATING FACTS,

and for that reason, if for no other, is worth an experiment. The little town of Lourdes is situated in the department of the Hautes-Pyrénées, at the juncture of the seven valleys of the Lavedan, between the last hills which terminate the plain of Tarbes and the first abrupt rocks of the great mountain. In form it resembles a pigeon pie, made in a circular dish, with the birds' feet sticking out of the upper crust, in accordance with Mme. Cook's idea of ornamentation, which usually consists in putting some piece of rubbish in the wrong place. The houses are grouped in a disorderly manner, at the base of a large isolated rock, upon the summit of which has been erected a strong fortress. Beneath, amidst the shade of poplar trees runs the Gave, a noisy river, always quarrelling with flint stones and much used for the purpose of washing linen. The borders of the Gave round Lourdes have generally a hard and savage aspect, with here and there a charming bit of landscape let into them by some caprice of nature.

In the Middle Ages the Castle of Lourdes was held now by the Saracens, now by the English and then by the Counts of Bigorre. They seemed to have perched upon it like birds of prey and thence swooped down upon travellers. In the eighteenth century the fortress of Lourdes became a State prison and was known as the Bastile of the Pyrenees. The Revolution burst open this Bastile, as it had done the other, and set the prisoners in it free to replace them with others who were indeed culpable in a very different degree. The local records give a list of their crimes:—1. Incivic (?) 2. Refusing the kiss of peace to citizen N. (a very ladylike crime this)? 3. Troublesomeness (a more terrible sort of guilt). 4. Drunkenness. 5. Icy coldness of feeling about the Revolution (*De glace pour la Révolution*). 6. Hypocritical and reserved disposition. 7. A disposition as fond of lying as a dentist. 8. Sly and peaceful miseriiness; indifferent about the Revolution. They were not very easy masters these first republicans, who upset their locksmith king and his pretty wife. Under the First Empire the fortress of Lourdes was maintained as a State prison, being some ten days' journey from the capital, so that a bawling patriot could hardly make his voice heard from such a distance. The Restoration converted it into a fortified place of the fifth order and put a hundred of infantry under the command of a major in it for the sake of appearances rather than defence. Lourdes, nevertheless, continues to be the key of the Pyrenees, though in a different sense from that understood by soldiers. It is in the midst of the hot springs resorted to for curative purposes, as though all

MANKIND SHOULD BE BOILED WHEN TENDER.

Whether one wants to get to Barréges or to St. Sauveur, to Cauterets or to Baguerre de Bigorre, it is equally necessary to pass through Lourdes. Ever since the baths of the Pyrenees first came into fashion a score of diligences daily deposited their passengers at the Hôtel de la Poste, and allowed them just time to dine and look about them, no more. Thus for about a century this little town, being constantly traversed by strangers, picked up some ideas from them, and its inhabitants became advanced thinkers, rather proud of their civilization. In 1858, when Lourdes was about to obtain a worldwide celebrity, most of the Parisian reviews and newspapers had readers there. The *Revue des Deux Mondes*, then at the head of French literature, numbered several regular subscribers. The coffee houses and wine shops took in the *Siècle*, a very unorthodox print. The local gentry and the clergy divided their attention between the *Journal des Débats* (then admirably conducted by an unequalled staff of writers) and the *Presse*, the *Moniteur*, the *Univers* and the *Union*. Lourdes had a club, a printing press and a newspaper of its own; also a court of law, a well organized police and various public establishments of importance. The population, like most mountaineers, were noticeable for their hard and practical common sense; and it would have been as difficult to get the better of them as of a community of Scotch Highlanders. They were strong, healthy people, of a pure race, which had seldom intermixed with foreigners; and contemporary statistics mentioned few places where the schools were so well attended as those of Lourdes. Every little boy there was sent to some schoolmaster or religious fraternity to acquire the groundwork of education. Every little girl was sent to the convent school of the Sisters of Nevers. Far better taught than the inhabitants of most French towns, they nevertheless preserved much of the simplicity of a country life. They were hot-tempered folk, generally upright and just in their dealings and averse to change. They made good conservatives in politics, and their morality was, and is, exceptionally good.

A WISE LITTLE TOWN

it was, and when one came to consider its institutions there were several things worth notice in them. For instance, the secret of trades' unions had been known to the Lourdes workingmen ever since the fifteenth century. They were called "brotherhoods," and, strange to say, they were approved and protected by the Roman Catholic Church. Each of these brotherhoods had a chapel, where they met for prayers, instead of a pothouse, where they might have met to drink, and from the name of that chapel they took their designation. The brotherhood of "Our Lady of Grace" was composed of agricultural laborers, quite a new thing in England, which lately stirred up that honest and elegant gentleman, the titular Duke of Buckingham, with other wondering sages. The brotherhood of "Our Lady of Mount Carmel" was composed of slate workers; that of "Our Lady of Montserrat" of masons. The "Brotherhood of St. Anne" admitted none but locksmiths; another none but tailors. The "Brotherhood of the Ascension" was a union of quarrymen. The workwomen of Lourdes, too, had formed similar associations, and one of them, called "The Congregation of the Children of Mary," was particularly noticeable. These ladies had taken the women's rights question, which is puzzling

POOR LITTLE LORD AMBERLEY,

into their own hands, and settled it satisfactorily before His Lordship was born. Poor little Lord Amberley could not contrive to tumble down over something strange or new in spite of all his efforts to do so.

Such was the state of Lourdes and its inhabitants in 1858. They were citizens of no mean city, though it was such a long way from Paris and New York. Among the surroundings of this vivacious little town there was no spot more wild and solitary than that known as Les Roches Marsabielles, at the foot of which raged the turbulent river Gave. A little above this stream the base of the rock was pierced by three irregular excavations, rising one on the top of the other, with a communication open between them. The first and largest of these excavations was on a level with the ground. It was of the size and form of those little tents which are pitched by wandering pedlers at fairs, and it looked rather like one side of a big shapeless oven. The entrance to this grotto was through an arch about four yards high; the width of it was about equal to its depth and measured fifteen yards. Above, on the right hand of the spectator, were two other openings. Seen from without the principal of these two openings appeared of an oval shape, about the size of a house window or a niche of a church. A wild rose tree, springing out of a crevice in the rock, wreathed its pliant branches round the orifice, like a garland. The three excavations here described were called

THE GROTTO OF MARSABIELLE.

Around it was an uncultivated steep belonging to the town of Lourdes, and chiefly used for feeding swine. The swineherds who tended them, and now and then a fisherman, took refuge from the storm and wind in this grotto. The storms were very strong and merciful in this region, and they rent away many dry sticks from off the trees around, which served to warm the poor in Winter time.

THE APPARITION OF THE VIRGIN.

It was on the 11th of February, 1858, during that boisterous week of carnival which precedes Lent. The weather was cold, but without wind, and the clouds rested immovable in the heavens. A few drops of rain fell at rare intervals. Throughout the diocese of Tarbes was being celebrated the festival of the illustrious shepherdess of France, St. Geneviève. Eleven o'clock before noon had just struck by the church clock of Lourdes. While everywhere among the well-to-do citizens preparations were being made for mirth and feasting, a poor family, who rented one of the most miserable houses in the street of "The Little Ditches," seemed cut off from the world and could take no part in its pleasures. They had not even fuel to cook their meagre dinner. The father of this poor family had once been a miller; but things had gone ill with him, and he was now obliged to hire himself out as a day laborer when he could get work, which was not often. His name was Francis Soubirons, and he was married to an honest woman named Louise Castérot. They had four children—two daughters, of whom the eldest was fourteen years old, and two sons much younger.

BERNADETTE,

their eldest daughter, was a sickly child, who had only returned home within the last fortnight, and, as all the world is now concerned with her, it may be as well to record what is known to many living people about her antecedents. She was an invalid from her birth. Her mother, who was then sickly too, having been unable to suckle her, put her out at nurse in the neighboring village of Bartres, and Bernadette remained there after she was weaned. Her parents paid—sometimes in money, but more often in kind—about five francs a month for her board and lodging. They could not afford to keep a sick child at home, for there was no one to nurse it but its mother, who had enough to do with her other children and her housework. As soon as the girl was strong enough to work they sent for her, indeed; but the poor peasants who had brought her up by hand had become strongly attached to her, and were unwilling to let her go. They agreed to adopt her, and employed her to tend a little flock of sheep. She grew up under the care of her adopted family, passing most of her days in solitude upon the hillside, where the sheep were feeding. Was it not, by the way, some shepherds watching their flocks who first saw the star of Bethlehem? With respect to religion she knew no more than how to tell her beads, and, whether from the advice of her nurse or from her own choice, she was telling her beads continually. She was very fond of her sheep; and, being asked by some one which of them she liked best, she answered simply, "The smallest and weakest of them." Of this sheep she made a playfellow—she had no other—and she was often found decking it with wild flowers. She was a miserable-looking little thing herself, so small and feeble that when fourteen years of age and on the verge of womanhood she looked no more than ten years old. She was not then sickly, but she was troubled with an asthma which caused her much suffering. She bore her affliction with that patient resignation which seems so difficult to the rich, but which is inborn and natural to the poor. Perhaps it was in the school of physical suffering that she learned that simplicity and habit of self-sacrifice which have been enjoined by all religions. Of the world and its wickedness, its joys and its vanities, she knew absolutely nothing.

She was an amiable child, and had the gift of making herself beloved by those around her; but she had a very bad opinion of herself. She could neither read nor write, and therefore she felt at a grievous disadvantage in the presense of other children of her own age. Moreover, she could not even speak French, and only understood the barbarous dialect or *patois* of the Pyrenees. She had never been taught her catechism. The only prayers she knew were some broken phrases—"Our Father," "I salute you, Mary, full of grace," "I believe," "Glory be to the Father," and that was all. It is needless to add that she had never been confirmed, and that all the splendor, pomp and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church were utterly unknown to her. It was, indeed, in order to teach her the catechism that her parents had invited her to pay them a visit. She had been with them nearly a fortnight; and, made anxious by her asthma and frail, wistful looks, her mother took especial care of her. While her brothers and sisters ran about with bare feet in their wooden shoes, warm socks had been provided for her. God only knows what even love costs the very poor. She was also kept within the house, that she might not be made worse by wind and weather.

Upon the feast of St. Geneviève the child was restless. It was cold, and there was no fire. There could be no food either till fire was made.

"Be off, you, to the banks of the Gave and gather some sticks to make the pot boil," said Mme. Soubirons to her second daughter, whose name was Mary. The girl put on her wooden shoes, while her sister watched her with envious looks.

"Let me go with her, mother. I too can gather a little bundle of fagots," said the invalid.

"No," replied her mother; "you have been coughing, my dear, and you will make yourself ill."

A girl named Jeanne Abadie, a neighbor's daughter, about fifteen years old, came to the house at this moment, and also wanted to be of the party. So all the children together coaxed Mme. Soubirons out of a permission to let them set off in company. The invalid girl was thinly clad and her head was merely bound round with a cotton kerchief, after the fashion of South France. Her mother cast a keen glance at her. "Put on your *capulet*," she said briefly. The *capulet*, which once gave the name to a political party, is a graceful garment peculiar to the mountaineers of the Pyrenees. It answers a double purpose, and is at once a cloak and a headdress. It is a kind of *capuchon*, or cowl, such as that which gave its title to the Capuchin monks and to the finest of the Parisian boulevards. It is made of strong cloth, sometimes white as a lamb's fleece, sometimes of a bright scarlet. It covers the head and falls down upon the shoulders as low as the waist. When the weather is cold and windy the Pyrenees women cover their breasts and arms all over with it. In Summer time they fold it in a neat square and wear it upon their heads as a four-cornered hat. The *capulet* of the small shepherdess of Bartres was white, and she was clothed in it when she first saw the vision of the Virgin Mary.

PORTRAIT OF BERNADETTE.

I have the portrait of this little girl before me as I write. She is a small creature, with a face wonderfully sweet and earnest—nothing at all like trick or falsehood in it. She has a broad, smooth, open brow, with a candid expression on it. Her deep-set eyes seem trying, with all their might and main, to be good and true. Her nose is of that Grecian order which has given laws to beauty, and her mouth is firm-set, yet soft. I do not think that mouth could tell a lie. Her face is oval, rounded and lovely. Her hair is hidden beneath a modest little cap, so that only the parting of it and the back hair can be seen. A fairer vision than this little girl has never broken upon a poet's dream. A dainty, quaint and pretty little thing. You must kiss her, for there is a wondrous dignity about this child, that does not know her catechism. She holds a rosary in her hand, and her common dress mounts high up to her throat. I never saw a face so wondrously calm, and, mind, the grace of it is not some cunning trick of a painter's hand, "some artful dodge" of an imaginary priesthood, ever looking out for dupes and alert to deceive as no community of human beings ever have been or could be. The sun struck off from nature this faithful resemblance of the little girl. A mite of a thing, in a little white riding hood, she tripped out of the town of Lourdes with her sister and her friend, escorted by her brother, who perhaps intended to marry the friend when he grew up; and hand in hand, chattering as they went, they came to the left bank of the River Gave.

The River Gave, at the point where they stopped, is now a deep and rapid stream. I asked a peasant how these little children crossed it on foot. They could not cross it now swimming. He said that it was formerly so shallow that to ford it was easy. The children began to pick up sticks, and passed over to a little island called the Châlet, on the property of one M. de Lafitte, where there were many sticks. The elect girl, who was about to see the Virgin Mary, felt her strength give way, and her sturdy young companions strode on ahead of her. She had picked up nothing, and her apron was empty—she was a very Cinderella of an elect little girl—while her sister, her sister's friend and her brother had their arms full of fagots. She had on a black frock, all darned and pieced and threadbare; her small feet were hidden in wooden shoes, her head and shoulders were covered with the snowy *capulet*. She must have looked an innocent rustic little girl, charming the heart of the beholder as much as the eyes. Her complexion, though tanned by the sun, had lost nothing of its native delicacy. Her silky black hair was hardly visible beneath the kerchief which bound it. The perfectly arched eyebrows over her almond-shaped brown eyes of exceeding softness gave them a look of gentle surprise. The pervading meaning of that little face was one of kindness and compassion.

Her countenance, at once fair and intelligent, won all who looked upon it. There seemed a mystic power and authority about this poor, ignorant child, dressed in mended rags; for about her was the rarest of earthly things,

THE MAJESTY OF INNOCENCE.

She had been christened after the great Doctor of the Church who wrote the "Memorare," and who had especially dedicated his life and its works to the Virgin Mary. I mean St. Bernard. In accordance with a graceful custom prevailing in France, the name of this great man, when given to a little peasant girl, had been softened into something pastoral and childlike, and the little girl, who owned the pretty name which had been made out of the great name, was called Bernadette. She sat down by the banks of the River Gave, for her companions had told her that the water was cold, and she hesitated to cross it. She had stockings on, too, and she was afraid to wet them.

"Throw two or three large stones on the ford and I can cross it dryfooted," said Bernadette; but the other children answered, "Do as we have done. Come across to the island barefooted."

So Bernadette sat down on the fragment of a rock and began to take off her stockings. It was noon by this time, and the "Angelus" sounded from the steeples of all the towns and villages of the Pyrenees. Bernadette had just taken off one of her stockings when she heard around her a murmur like the sighing of a wind sweeping over grass. She thought that a hurricane, such as she had often seen in the mountains, was coming on, and she looked around her for the premonitory symptoms of it. But, to her amazement, the poplars on the borders of the Gave were still. Not a breath of air stirred among their quiet branches. Thinking she had been mistaken, yet remembering the noise which she had heard, the child felt puzzled; and then she began to take off her other stocking. At this moment an impetuous gust of the invisible wind made itself heard again. Bernadette raised her head, and, looking up before her, tried to utter a loud cry, which died stifled on her lips. She trembled in all her limbs, and, crouching down, dazed and overwhelmed by the sight before her, the child fell all in a heap upon her knees. An amazing sight, indeed, had been revealed to her. Above the grotto within that upper niche there stood, surrounded by a supernatural radiance, a lady of incomparable splendor.

ATMOSPHERE OF THE VIRGIN.

The ineffable light which floated about her did not trouble the vision and daze the eyes, like the intolerable brightness of the sun. On the contrary, this aureola, brilliant as a stream of rays, was as peaceful as a profound shadow, and attracted the child's looks, which bathed and reposed in it with a sense of delight. This light was as the light of a morning star in its freshness. Nor was there anything vague and vaporous about the apparition within it. It had not the uncertain outlines of a fantastic vision; it was, it looked like, a living reality, a human body, which the eye judged to be of palpable flesh like ours; and it differed only from the person of a mortal by the aureola around it and by its divine beauty. "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living," I have somewhere read.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF THE VIRGIN MARY.

She was of middle height. She seemed quite young, and she had the grace of her twentieth Summer, but without losing anything of its tenderness. Grace, which is so fugitive here below, seemed in her to wear the aspect of eternity. Moreover, the divine lineaments of her face seemed to mingle, leaving their harmony undisturbed, the successive and deepening kinds of beauty of all the four seasons of human life. There were the innocent candor of the child, the absolute purity of the virgin, the gravity of motherhood and the wisdom of age, all blended together in the marvellous countenance of the celestial visitor. Words can no more tell her praises than lamps can show the lustre of a star.

THE VIRGIN'S FACE.

The regularity and ideal purity of her features no language can describe. It can merely record that her face was oval; that her eyes were blue and of a suavity which melted the heart of the beholder. Her lips breathed goodness and mercy. Her brow was stately and august.

THE VIRGIN'S DRESS.

Her robes were made of an unknown material of a whiteness purer than the snow, and more magnificent in their simplicity than the dress of a queen. Her gown was long and trained in chaste folds upon the ground, leaving her feet only visible. They reposed upon the rock, and each of them pressed a branch of eglantine, without crushing it. Upon each of her feet, which were bare and white, blossomed the mystic rose of golden hue.

THE VIRGIN'S SASH.

A sky-blue sash was round her waist. It was knotted in front, and the ends of it hung down in broad bands to her feet. Behind she was enveloped in

AN AMPLE WHITE VEIL,

which covered her arms and shoulders; it was fixed to her hair and descended as low as her gown.

THE VIRGIN WORE NO ORNAMENTS;

no ring, necklace, diadem or jewels; not one of those trinkets with which human vanity delights to deck itself. A chaplet, of which the beads were white as milk and through which passed a chain yellow as a wheat ear ripe for harvest, hung down from her hands, which were joined in the attitude of fervent prayer. She did not speak. She seemed to be listening to the invocations ever rising up to her, and with every bead she touched she appeared as though she bestowed some grace upon her worshippers.

The little girl who saw this heavenly vision, having recovered from her first amazement, felt no more fear. She sought instinctively her beads, and made the sign of the cross, remaining still upon her knees. Then the Virgin, with a grave, sweet look, which seemed like a benediction, made the sign of the cross also, and when she had done so the child found courage to utter her broken prayers:—"I believe in God," "I salute you, Mary, full of grace." As she finished them, as usual, with the words "Glory be to the Father" the luminous vision suddenly disappeared.

Bernadette, after some hesitation, told her companions, and then her mother, what she had seen. The children thought it was an evil spirit. Her mother thought nothing at all, and dismissed the subject curtly with the word "nonsense." When, however, Bernadette persisted in her story, Mme. Soubirons said, "Very well, but don't do it again." (*Quoiqu'il en soit, n'y retourne plus, je te le défends.*) Fancy maternal authority forbidding those under it to hold any intercourse with the Virgin Mary! Who were those eminent persons among the Gadarenes who, as soon as they had seen the Divine Master, prayed Him to depart out of their coasts—in short, would have nothing at all to do with Him?

Bernadette, however, was never easy till she had seen the "lady," as she called the vision in her countryfied jargon, again. The other children, half frightened and half curious, thought also of nothing else but the marvellous event, and so upon the following Sunday, three full days after Bernadette had first seen the Virgin, she had persuaded her mother to let her return to the grotto in the rocks of Marsabielle. The children who accompanied her suggested that she should take some holy water, and they filled a pint bottle with it for that purpose. "If it is the devil," reasoned these urchins, "he will take himself off if you sprinkle him with holy water. You will merely have to say, if you come from God, draw near; if you come from the demon, depart."

Bernadette thus armed, and with her chaplet in her hands, sat down again in the grotto and saw—nothing.

"Let us pray," she said, "and let us tell our beads."

The children kneeled down and each began the recitation of the rosary. Then all at once the face of Bernadette was transfigured before them; an extraordinary emotion was depicted on all her features and her eyes beamed with a strange light. For there, her feet planted upon the rock, the marvellous vision was again manifest to her eyes.

"Look, she is there!" exclaimed Bernadette; but the other children saw nothing save the desert rock, about which climbed the branches of eglantine. The appearance of Bernadette, however, made it impossible to doubt her words, and one of the children now placed the bottle of holy water in her hand. Then she rose, and, shaking her bottle vigorously, she sprinkled with its contents that gracious lady who stood within a few steps of her in the interior of the niche.

"If you come from God, draw near," said Bernadette, repeating the form of language which she had agreed on with her companions. At the words and actions of the child the Virgin inclined her head several times, and advanced to the extreme edge of the rock. She seemed to smile at the precautions of Bernadette and at her warlike attitude. So the little girl called out again, "If you come from God, I say, draw near;" but she was so impressed by the majesty of the Virgin that she did not dare to add anything about the demon. She only knelt down and continued to recite her chaplet, while the Virgin seemed to listen, counting her own beads also one by one. When Bernadette had said her prayer the apparition vanished for the second time.

THIRD APPEARANCE OF THE VIRGIN.

The father and mother of Bernadette considered the apparition which their daughter had seen as an illusion. "This is merely one of the fancies of little girls," they said, carelessly; but their neighbors, getting wind of what had happened, came to find out what it all meant, much to their amazement; for when they began to interrogate Bernadette she answered them without hesitation; and neither doubt nor equivocation could be discovered in her account of what had happened to her. Up to this period the story of Bernadette's visions had sounded like childish tittle-tattle upon the ears of her elders—a subject to be set aside when there was work to do, and Bernadette herself sent to bed with a flea in her ear for company. But the thing was now growing serious, and two ladies, named Mlle. Antoinette Peyret and Mme. Millet, both still living at Lourdes, took the matter up and resolved to see into it—did see into it on Thursday, the 18th February, at six o'clock in the morning, and insisted upon going with Bernadette to the grotto. The Virgin then appeared for the third time to Bernadette. Mme. Millet and Mlle. Peyret wished likewise to see the celestial visitor, but could in no way contrive it, though they had tried hard. All they could make out was Bernadette in an ecstasy of prayer and devotion. The two ladies requested Bernadette to ask the Virgin if their presence was displeasing to her. The child seemed to listen for a moment, and then answered, "You may remain here." Then each of the three lit a waxen taper and knelt down to pray while the Winter sun broke faintly through the clouds and mists of morning. Bernadette, who was still in a pious ecstasy continued to regard the celestial being, invisible to every eye but hers, and after a while her companions spoke to her again.

"Go to her, since she beckons to you. Ask who she is and why she comes. Ask if she is a soul in purgatory who implores our prayers, and request her to write down her wishes that we may fulfil them." Mme. Millet and Mlle. Peyret had brought pen, ink and paper, which they gave to Bernadette, who then advanced towards the apparition. As she moved forward step by step the apparition began to retire into the interior of the grotto, and the child followed it.

"My lady," said little Bernadette, "if you have anything to communicate will you please to have the goodness to state in writing who you are and what you want?"

WHAT THE VIRGIN MARY SAID.

The Divine Virgin smiled at this simple question. Her lips then parted and she said:—

"I need not write down what I have to tell you. Do me the favor to come hither every day for fifteen days."

"I promise to do so," replied Bernadette. The Virgin smiled again at this answer and replied:—

"And as for me I promise to make you happy; not by any means (*non point*) in this world, but in the other."

Mme. Millet and Mlle. Peyret, when informed of these particulars, asked whether they might also return every day to the grotto with Bernadette, and the Virgin told Bernadette that they might do so. Upon this occasion, as before, Bernadette remarked that when the "lady," as she still called the apparition, was about to vanish, the light around her remained for a brief space after she was gone; and that when the vision was about to appear before her, first the light made itself visible and then the lady.

PUBLIC OPINION AT LOURDES.

The next day a crowd of 100 persons followed Bernadette to the grotto, and the day afterwards it had increased to more than five hundred. No one present on these occasions could see anything more than a little child praying in an ecstasy under the shadow of a cavern in a rude rock. Nothing, absolutely nothing, and the scoffers began to laugh at them. The doctors said that Bernadette was merely suffering from catalepsy—a common and well understood disease. The editor of a radical paper printed that she was a thief. The people in the wine shops, whose ideas were farthest advanced, said she wanted to be a thief and get money by tricks, beneath discussion by an honest toper, who could empty a pint of wine at a draught. It was clear, too, that there was going to be an awful row in the town, and Prudence, so careful of little things, so careless of great ones, steadfastly vowed to keep out of it. The doctors began the fight. Most of them pooh-poohed the thing, and were prepared to show that any child who held conversation with supernatural beings wanted physicking, just as Samuel did. "The girl is cataleptic," said the doctors, with a decisive grunt.

"Ah!" replied Dr. Dozons, who happened to be the most distinguished medical man in the town, and was not fond of hasty conclusions, "I know all about catalepsy, but cataleptics of this sort are very scarce, and I shall be glad to see one." Accordingly, this Dr. Dozons, with M. Dufo, the principal advocate of the town, a number of his legal brethren, all members of the Bar; M. Pougat, President of the Local Tribunal, and almost every other person of note at Lourdes determined to watch the little girl at her prayers in the grotto, to interrogate her sharply and bluntly by turn and to find out as they were true men if they could discover any signs of catalepsy or deceit in her. They found no indication whatever of either malady.

CALLING IN THE CHURCH.

The local clergy, when called upon impatiently to put a stop to the thing or to sanction it, steadily refused to interfere. The Curé of Lourdes, M. Peyramale (who still holds the living), was then a wise, somewhat stern man, fifty years old. "If," said he, using an argument not unfamiliar to Bible readers, "if these things are of God, nothing can be done with effect to oppose them; if they are not, the moment for the Church to intervene is when it sees heresy or sacrilege on foot." In few words, "Let us leave things to Providence," and the local clergy hearkened to the voice of Abbé Peyramale. When Monseigneur Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, was appealed to, he confirmed the cautious decision of the Curé of Lourdes. "Let us wait," said the Bishop, and he forbade all the clergymen in his diocese to have anything to do with Bernadette or her grotto till further notice. The French priesthood determined to maintain an armed neutrality.

THE VOICE OF LIBERALISM.

Then arose the liberal party in Lourdes, who read the *Siècle* newspaper and were loud about the rights of men and women, and they shouted out, "In the name of Liberty, is there no way of shutting up this little girl? In the name of conscience, is there no means of stopping her prayers and the prayers of those who are praying with her? In the name of Freedom, shall people be allowed to go on their knees in a grotto?"

EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY.

M. Dutour, the Procureur Impérial; M. Duprat, the Judge, with the Mayor, the Town Clerk and the Commissary of Police, also took alarm. A miracle in the nineteenth century, performed without permission from the authorities, seemed to them an intolerable outrage on civilization. Their honor was clearly concerned in putting a stop to it. Such was the state of affairs at Lourdes on the 21st of February, 1858, which was the first Sunday in Lent and the third of the fifteen days appointed by the Virgin for the visits of Bernadette to the grotto in the Rocks of Marsabielle. Long before sunrise an immense crowd, which could be only numbered by thousands of people, had assembled on the borders of the Gave, and swarmed over the country from every point within sight or hail of the grotto. As soon as the dawn broke Bernadette arrived as usual, attended by her mother and sister. Her mother having witnessed her ecstacies the day before had now become convinced of their supernatural character. But she would make no money by it and poor she and her husband lived in extreme poverty till their death. The child walked simply on without assurance and without embarrassment. The crowd respectfully made way for her. She did not seem to understand that she was an object of general attention. She went into the grotto as one who is doing some plain act of duty, and she knelt down to pray there.

A few moments afterwards she was transfigured again in the presence of thousands of witnesses. Her brow beamed with a mysterious light, and grew radiant with a surprising glory. But her face did not flush; she seemed rather to become paler, as if her nature were too weak to bear the presence of the apparition manifested to her without giving way. Her mouth was half opened, as that of one breathless with wonder and admiration. Her eyes became fixed and dreamy, and the poor little, vulgar peasant girl appeared as though she no longer belonged to earth, but had passed into a higher sphere. All who saw her thus are still ready to declare that never before nor since have they seen a human face so changed. Their impression that she really did behold a celestial vision continues as strong as ever even to this day, and twenty of them separately interrogated (all persons having no object in deceiving me—none of them innkeepers or pious rubbish mongers or priests) have solemnly assured me of these facts upon their word of honor, within these last three days (July 26, 1873).

MEDICAL TESTIMONY.

Doctor Dozons was beside her on this third morning of the fifteen days that the Virgin had promised to appear before her. He watched her closely, marked all she said and did, and he especially noticed that she never lost consciousness of what was going on around her, and that she was perfectly calm and reasonable when addressed. "There is neither catalepsy, nor hallucination in this girl," said Doctor Dozons. "Her limbs do not stiffen; she knows quite well what she is about. The phenomena exhibited in her case are altogether unknown to medicine. Her pulse is perfectly regular. She is in no state of bodily or mental over-excitement."

The Virgin, having enjoined Bernadette to "pray for the wicked," vanished from her sight as on previous occasions.

THE LAW INTERFERES.

As Bernadette was leaving the church of Lourdes with the rest of the congregation after vespers, on the evening of the day when she had kept her fourth appointment with the Virgin, the awful form of the French official stood up suddenly in her path like a lion, or at least that animal which wore a lion's skin.

"In the name of the law," said the voice speaking by the mouth of Policeman Jacomet.

"What do you want, sir?" inquired the small shepherdess, who in dress, manners or appearance could not be distinguished from any other little peasant girl who had just said her prayers.

"I am ordered to arrest you and take you up," replied Jacomet.

"Take me up where?" said the wondering girl.

"Up to the Commissary of Police. Come along," growled Jacomet.

Bernadette told her story firmly and clearly, and Policeman Jacomet put the child under an interminable cross examination. Nevertheless, he could not detect any falsehood in her narrative, and, having in vain tried to bamboozle her into contradicting, he abruptly put on a terrible aspect and roared.

"You lie," bellowed Policeman Jacomet with sudden anger. "You are a cheat, an impostor, and unless you confess your sins I will have you marched off to prison." It was the old story. The victim had committed no offence; she had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds, and it seemed unreasonable to send her for punishment and not wherewithal to signify the crimes charged against her. "Come, thou victim," shrieks the legal representative, "criminate thyself."

"What I have said, sir," persisted Bernadette, "is quite true" (*c'est la vérité*).

"I will lock you up if you do it again," bawled the policeman.

"I have promised," returned the child simply, "to go every day to the grotto and to pray there at a certain hour. When the time comes I am impelled (*je suis poussée*) to do so by something within me, and which calls upon me to keep my faith."

At this moment some tremendous thumps began to sound at the door of the room where this profane work was going on.

"Nobody can come in (*on n'entre pas*)," shouted the representative of the law.

But the thumps soon banged upon the door with an evident intention of beating it down if it was not opened; and when it gave way behind it loomed the burly strength of Francis Soubirons, the ruined miller, with an angry crowd at his back.

"I want my daughter," said the miller hoarsely, and then when he looked up and saw that he was